

The Peter and Katherine Tomassi Essay

**FORCED MARRIAGE AND THE ABSENCE OF
GANG RAPE: EXPLAINING SEXUAL VIOLENCE
BY THE LORD'S RESISTANCE ARMY IN
NORTHERN UGANDA**

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The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), notorious for committing horrific atrocities against civilians in northern Uganda, presents a puzzle. The LRA systematically abducted girls and forcibly married them to the rebel commanders and soldiers. Yet rape outside of these marriages was rare, and gang rape of civilians was noticeably absent from the LRA's repertoire of violence. Why did this seemingly incongruous pattern of violence develop? Is this behavior truly as surprising as it appears?

Variation in wartime sexual violence, both within and across conflicts, has been recognized in the past decade. Recent research has focused on documenting this heterogeneity and analyzing its patterns, yet sexual violence during the LRA's twenty-year insurgency—its form and its causes—has not been adequately studied. The case merits attention because it introduces a curious challenge to existing explanations of sexual violence during war. Moreover, as one of Africa's longest lasting and largest insurgencies, the LRA continues to destabilize the Great Lakes region. For that reason, defeating this armed group is a security imperative for several east African nations, as well as a foreign policy objective of the United States.

The premise of my argument is that different forms of sexual violence have varying purposes, and there is a logic behind the rebels' repertoire of violence. Accordingly, this paper will pose two questions. First, why did the LRA practice forced marriage and how was the LRA's agenda advanced by arranging such relationships? Second, why did the LRA not commit more rape outside

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of forced marriage than was observed? It is counter-intuitive to grossly violate women's rights in one context while institutionalizing restraint from sexual violence in another. The literature on war-time sexual violence would indeed predict widespread gang rape of civilians by the LRA. However, empirical evidence contradicts this theory. How can we understand this unexpected rebel behavior?

Through the use of secondary data analysis, I contend that the LRA's observed patterns of sexual violence result largely from its operating in an environment with few material resources and lack of popular support for an army composed almost entirely of abducted youth. Forced marriage helped maintain the army under these circumstances. Wives were distributed as compensation and status markers for soldiers in the absence of material goods, and families were fabricated to create networks of interdependency among the combatants. The LRA leadership prohibited rape outside of marriage, because the practice was not instrumental to the rebels' success. Controlling sexual violence reflects not only cultural norms against rape but also the leadership's need to exert control over its army of forcibly recruited soldiers. Brutal nonsexual forms of violence were promoted instead of gang rape to induce cohesion and loyalty among abductees. In contrast to the claim that gang rape best unites a group of abducted soldiers, the LRA's ferocious, nonsexual violence was successful at increasing the rebels' efficacy while avoiding the cultural and practical complications of extra-marital rape.

This paper examines the practices of sexual violence employed by the LRA during its rebellion in northern Uganda and analyzes the functional purpose of its violence. I first define the terms used in my analysis, followed by a review of the literature on sexual violence during war that attempts to decipher what existing theorists on sexual violence would expect to observe in the case of the LRA. Following an overview of the conflict in northern Uganda and the LRA, I describe the LRA's repertoire of violence, specifically sexual violence, and explain why forced marriages were pervasive in the army. I then discuss current theories that predict that the LRA would practice less controlled sexual violence and perpetrate

more gang rape of civilians than was observed. In response, I propose why the LRA deviates from these models. I conclude with a discussion of the implications of this analysis and areas for further research.

DEFINITIONS

Sexual violence is a broad grouping of offenses; the International Criminal Court (ICC) defines it as an act of a sexual nature committed by force or coercion, the gravity of which is “comparable to that of a grave breach of the Geneva Conventions.”¹ The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda adds, “Sexual violence is not limited to physical invasion of the human body and may include acts which do not involve penetration or even physical contact.”² The ICC enumerates several types of sexual violence, and though forced marriage has not been explicitly recognized among these examples, it qualifies as sexual violence according to the aforementioned definitions.³ Therefore, the act of forced marriage can be subsumed under the category of sexual violence.

Rape also falls under the umbrella of sexual violence and is defined as “the coerced (under physical force or threat of physical force against the victim or a third person) penetration of the anus or vagina by the penis or another object, or of the mouth by the penis.”⁴ Acts of rape take many forms, and it is necessary to distinguish those that pertain to this analysis. Rape within forced marriage refers to non-consensual sexual acts between a captor husband and his abducted wife. Rape outside of forced marriage (or extra-marital rape) is the rape of a forced wife by someone other than her husband, or the rape of non-forcibly married women—both abductees and civilians. Gang rape is any crime of rape perpetrated by a group of people.

FRAMING THE CASE: SEXUAL VIOLENCE LITERATURE

For the past decade, social science literature has recognized the heterogeneity of wartime sexual violence practices. Elisabeth

Wood illustrates that conflicts (and by extension, actors within conflicts) may differ in the extent to which they utilize sexual violence and the form in which it occurs.⁵ Still, numerous traditional interpretations of sexual violence fail to account for the observed variation.⁶ For example, neither the type of conflict nor theories about increased opportunity for sexual aggression during war explain the diversity of sexually based crimes perpetrated in times of conflict. Explanations that focus on the breakdown of state and of patriarchy have also proven to be inadequate in this respect. Many scholars have, therefore, turned to differences in internal socialization and discipline practices to explain this variation.

Wood holds that leaders of an armed force may attempt to restrain sexual violence for various normative, practical or strategic reasons.⁷ If the leadership hierarchy is sufficiently strong, commanders will be able to successfully enforce these norms among their troops and curb sexual violence. In a similar vein, Amelia Hoover Green argues that “controlled violence,”⁸ or “violence with a relatively narrow, consistent repertoire,”⁹ is observed when commanders institutionalize political programs that induce soldiers to internalize the leaders’ preferences for narrow repertoires. Hoover Green emphasizes the absence of sexual violence as an important indicator of such internalization. She also posits that external incentives and disincentives—in other words, disciplinary mechanisms—are insufficient for enforcing control. Hoover Green proves her theory and determines what factors contribute to varying repertoires of violence using qualitative and statistical data about armed groups engaged in El Salvador’s civil war in the 1980s.

Though the LRA committed an array of crimes against civilians, the scope of its sexual crimes was nonetheless heavily restricted. In light of the LRA’s limited repertoire of sexual violence, Hoover Green would expect the presence of strong institutions for political education that regulate violence. In addition, Hoover Green holds that such institutions are established when a commander has incentives to control his soldiers’ behavior, such as when the group depends on non-combatants for information. She would therefore predict that incentives for limiting violence, such

as the need to extract information from civilians, existed for the LRA, and that the leadership promoted political institutions that control violence. As we will see, however, applying Hoover Green's theory to the case of the LRA fails when empirical evidence is taken into consideration.

Dara Kay Cohen addresses the flip side of Hoover Green's argument and asks when armed groups encourage, or at least permit, sexual violence. Cohen suggests that gang rape is perpetrated as a response to an army's problem of intragroup social dynamics.¹⁰ Armed groups with little internal cohesion, in particular those that rely on forced recruitment, use gang rape to forge a coherent unit. Given that the LRA is made almost entirely of abducted children, Cohen's theory predicts combatants will perpetrate high levels of gang rape in order to promote unity and loyalty among the group. However, this prediction does not hold true for the LRA.

Dara Kay Cohen has coded global levels of wartime rape, and though the Ugandan conflict is included in her dataset, it is not helpful for assessing levels of LRA gang rape or rape outside of marriage. Cohen analyzes total wartime rape by country, and so it is difficult to isolate the magnitude of rapes committed by the LRA when groups as diverse as the Ugandan state army, Holy Spirit Movement, West Nile Bank Front, and Karamajong warriors are also under consideration.¹¹ In addition, the sources for Cohen's dataset—U.S. State Department Human Rights Reports and Amnesty International—do not focus on levels of gang rape specifically.¹² They write of rape and sexual violence in broad terms and do not sufficiently differentiate between types of sexual violence.

The LRA's practices of sexual violence are most directly examined by Khristopher Carlson and Dyan Mazurana. Based on interviews with abducted girls and other informants, they describe the nature of forced marriage and analyze why it is experientially and legally different than sexual slavery, with which forced marriage is often considered synonymous.¹³ They demonstrate that forced marriage persisted within the LRA because it was organized by the top leadership in order to increase the rebels' effectiveness. I will draw substantially from this theory. Yet there is a gap in their

argument, as they do not consider the surprising absence of extra-marital rape by the LRA. This paper will thus fill a void in the current literature by addressing a question that has not yet been posed: why did the LRA's repertoire of sexual violence develop in its observed form?

BACKGROUND

The LRA has orchestrated one of Africa's most expansive and protracted insurgencies. Originating in northern Uganda in the late 1980s, the rebellion survived for two decades before vacating Uganda and spreading its violence to three neighboring countries. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, and South Sudan, the LRA continues to terrorize populations, exacerbate existing conflicts, and destabilize the Great Lakes Region. Quelling this insurgency thus remains a regional necessity, though the state capacity and will to do so is weak. Capturing the LRA's leader, Joseph Kony, and subduing the rebellion has also been a longstanding fixture of the United States' foreign policy agenda—an objective that has recently been renewed under President Obama.¹⁴

An additional reason to study the LRA is the geopolitical situation from which it originated. Uganda has been mired in political turmoil since gaining independence in 1956, and these tensions have frequently evoked regional and ethnic divisions. The north-south divide in particular “has at times been ethnicized . . . in the service of certain political agendas.”¹⁵ Milton Obote, the first head of state, ruled Uganda for twenty-one years, though his reign was interrupted for eight years by Idi Amin's dictatorship. Obote was a member of northern Uganda's Lango tribe, and his leadership was challenged by a guerilla campaign objecting to perceived northern domination.¹⁶ This military offensive, directed by Yuweri Museveni and supported by the country's southern regions, formed the National Resistance Army (NRA) to fight the state army, the Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA). In 1985, the NRA marched on the capitol and Museveni ascended to power.¹⁷

Following its military and political victory, the NRA seized control of Uganda's Acholi region and persecuted its residents; "rape and other forms of physical abuse aimed at non-combatants became the order of the day."¹⁸ In response to this violence and northern resentment of Museveni (a southern president), a resistance movement was born. Many former UNLA soldiers—which had been dominated by northerners from the Lango and Acholi tribes—regrouped to establish the Ugandan People's Democratic Army (UPDA), and a spiritual movement emerged under the guidance of Alice Auma, an Acholi woman believed to be possessed by the spirit Lakwena.¹⁹

Lakwena initially responded to the war-torn society by conducting healing rituals for UNLA soldiers retreating from Kampala and by explaining the war and UNLA defeat in "a discourse of spiritual cleansing" that had widespread appeal.²⁰ The cult evolved into the Holy Spirit Movement (HSM) as Lakwena built a following of former UNLA soldiers. These men battled the NRA under Lakwena's spiritual protection; she performed rituals that included blessing the soldiers with oil, and assured them they would be protected from bullets if they lived according to a set of rules, such as abstaining from sex and alcohol.²¹ The HSM was defeated in 1987 as it marched south toward Kampala.²² Though short-lived in the context of the long northern campaign against Museveni's government, Alice Auma's movement is important in the LRA's history, as there are striking continuities between the groups.

THE LORD'S RESISTANCE ARMY

A peace agreement was signed in 1988 between Museveni's government and the UPDA. Most UPDA troops surrendered to the government, but many sought new outlets for continuing their resistance.²³ Some joined a group led by Joseph Kony, which came to be known as the Lord's Resistance Army. The LRA was the third incarnation of the post-1986 insurgencies, and it ultimately had the longest lifespan. It asserted control in northern Uganda for two decades in the midst of numerous failed peace negotiations

and multi-national counter-insurgency operations. To some extent, the LRA initially prevailed in Uganda by default, and by 1990, it was the only significant military presence remaining.²⁴ Kony's group developed at the same time in competition with the HSM. It benefited tremendously from both the HSM's demise and the disintegration of the UPDA. The LRA absorbed many elements of these antecedent organizations: the HSM's spiritual drive and the UPDA's political objectives and troops.²⁵ Though this characterization is simplistic, it points to two central elements of the LRA ideology that are often characterized in tension.

Like its predecessors, the LRA's objective was the overthrow of the Ugandan government. The rebels conducted information campaigns, held political rallies, and even declared a ceasefire during the 1996 presidential elections to facilitate voting for the opposition candidate.²⁶ The LRA's goals were explicitly communicated in political manifestos circulated in the region, many of which also asserted the LRA's support for the protection of human rights.²⁷ There is thus a clear discrepancy between the group's written agenda and the reality experienced on the ground, as the LRA's insurgency is characterized predominantly by its targeting of civilians and its gross human rights violations.

Also central to the LRA's ideology was a strong spiritual belief system, similar to Lakwena's movement. Allegedly possessed by spirits, Joseph Kony injected numerous rules into the LRA's operations and established "a puritanical code of conduct that governed all aspects of behavior."²⁸ Drugs and alcohol were prohibited, and sex was permissible only within the sanctioned marriages arranged by LRA commanders.²⁹ Obeying these rules was considered necessary for survival. Soldiers were taught that those who complied were impervious to death during battle, while those who disobeyed would be killed in combat.³⁰ This spiritualism and its associated requirements were embedded in local cultures and traditions, but they also had a powerful function for the LRA, which will be elaborated upon later in this paper.³¹

The spiritual dimension of the LRA and its political agenda have often been presented in tension. A common perception

emerged of Kony as a religious lunatic who guides the LRA without political or social convictions and induces his soldiers to commit savage acts of violence without purpose.³² However, recent literature on the LRA has strived to reconcile the group's political and spiritual elements, rather than casting the former aside.³³ New analyses present a more nuanced understanding of the LRA's spiritual order and shed light on the political ideology of the organization and the "strategic rationality" of its violence.³⁴ The employment of spiritual rhetoric and ruthless violence are not incompatible with the group's political goals. In fact, this paper argues that the LRA's spiritualism and barbaric actions, including particular types of sexual violence, were purposeful and strategic.

The LRA's strategic vision was created and operationalized through a strong, hierarchical structure. Joseph Kony was the LRA's founder, general, ideological commander, and spiritual leader. His "direct involvement with the objectives and strategies"³⁵ of many attacks on civilians has been demonstrated, and he is charged with having "committed, ordered or induced the commission of several crimes within the jurisdiction of the [International Criminal] Court."³⁶ Kony, his second-in-command Vincent Otti, and other high-ranking LRA commanders constituted Control Altar—the group of rebel leaders who formulated and executed LRA strategy.³⁷ A clear hierarchy of command then oversaw the army's four brigades, which were broken into smaller battalions that yielded field units of fifteen to twenty soldiers, the operational unit of the organization.³⁸ The LRA operated from bases on the Sudanese side of the Ugandan border, and the self-sufficient field units were dispatched to northern Uganda to wage the LRA's guerrilla campaign.³⁹ All units communicated through radio and cell phones, which allowed them to coordinate attacks and travel together between the Sudanese bases and the Ugandan bush.⁴⁰

The LRA's decision to establish its bases in southern Sudan reflected the political and economic environment in which it operated. There were few natural resources to finance the LRA, and so they depended on financial assistance from the Sudanese government. The LRA's poverty was compounded by its alienation

from the public, in contrast to the previous resistance movements of the UPDA and Lakwena's Holy Spirit Movement.⁴¹ The LRA had no popular support in the region, despite pervasive opposition to Museveni's government among the Acholi. This estrangement was partially a result of the rebels' violence against civilians. As one woman said, "I would like to support the rebels, but they are killing my people."⁴² This causal relationship also operated in reverse; the public's alienation from the rebels reinforced the LRA's incentive to attack civilians.⁴³ In addition, Sudan's financial support of the LRA was critical in perpetuating the acrimonious relationship between the rebels and the people of northern Uganda. Not only did Sudan's financing the LRA increase the viability of its operating without wealth of its own, but it also reduced the rebels' incentive to win the public's endorsement.⁴⁴ It is in this context that one must understand the extraordinary violence perpetrated by the LRA.

Uganda's referral of its situation to the International Criminal Court in 2003 and the subsequent issuing of arrest warrants was essential to the onset of concerted negotiations in Juba, Sudan in 2006. Though Kony did not sign the peace agreement, it was during this period that LRA violence in Uganda ceased and the epicenter of its activities shifted to neighboring DRC, CAR, and what was then known as southern Sudan. Although peace has been established in Uganda, the LRA war has not been terminated, but merely exported.⁴⁵

Patterns of LRA Violence

The LRA attacked villages, killed and mutilated civilians, and looted their homes. They abducted young boys and girls, compelled them to kill their families, friends, and neighbors, and forced them to join the rebels as soldiers, porters, and wives. It is notable that soldiers forcibly recruited at a young age constituted the overwhelming majority of the LRA's forces. As the ICC stated, "The LRA has engaged in a cycle of violence and established a pattern of "brutalization of civilians" by acts including murder,

abduction, sexual enslavement, mutilation, as well as mass burnings of houses and looting of camp settlements.”⁴⁶ The range of crimes perpetrated was horrifying; to adopt the vocabulary used by Wood, the LRA’s repertoire of violence was relatively wide.⁴⁷ Nonetheless, violence by the LRA’s combatants was highly regulated and circumscribed. Crimes outside this prescribed range were rarely observed, and within the subset of sexual crimes, the LRA’s repertoire was exceptionally narrow, consisting almost exclusively of forced marriage.

LRA attacks on villages were frequent and the level of violence was high, regardless of how this measure is assessed. Compared to the NRA, as well as earlier resistance movements in the region, the LRA perpetrated remarkably more violence. The absolute number of crimes committed conveys the high levels of violence. Between 1987 and 2006, nearly two million people were displaced and thousands were murdered.⁴⁸ One in three male adolescents in northern Uganda was abducted, as were one in six females.⁴⁹

In addition to frequency, Wood distinguishes violence based on targeting and purpose.⁵⁰ The LRA engaged in collective targeting, as opposed to indiscriminate (random) violence or selective violence due to an individual’s behavior. Wood defines collective targeting as targeting “of social groups because of their identity as members of that group.”⁵¹ The rebels’ actions were nominally aimed at government collaborators, but in practice they directed their violence at the broader Acholi and Langi population in northern Uganda. Furthermore, this violence was strategic; it was executed at the behest of LRA commanders rather than for individual, private reasons.

Explaining Violence Against Civilians

There are several persuasive explanations for the LRA’s purposeful, extensive, and violent targeting of Acholi civilians. One plausible theory is that Kony strived to purge Acholi society of perceived impurities. Abducting children, for example, was considered a means of rescuing them from a tainted world order.⁵² Kony was

particularly focused on the impurities of the NRA and cleansing Acholi society of its collaborators. Kony fabricated a division between the “genuine Acholi”⁵³ who supported his campaign and “the corrupt, false Acholi”⁵⁴ allied with the NRA, and he intended to rid the region of the “political corruption . . . of the NRA/M, embodied in its Acholi agents.”⁵⁵ By aligning portions of Acholi society with the NRA and Museveni’s government, Kony linked them with southern Uganda and thus relegated them to out-group status. Branch writes, “Since violence was being used against supposed foreigners, it could take on a relatively unrestrained character.”⁵⁶

The LRA also targeted civilians as punishment, which was inflicted for three reasons: vengeance, deterrence, and incapacitation. First, increases in LRA violence were repeatedly observed following signs of civilian opposition. Civil defense militias to combat the LRA were established in 1991 and 1992 with the support of the government, which caused Kony to feel betrayed.⁵⁷ It was at this moment that brutal LRA violence against non-combatants initially escalated.⁵⁸ LRA strategy shifted from directly fighting the NRA to seeking revenge on the civilian population. This pattern suggests violence was perpetrated not only with the intent of vengeance but also to deter civilians from organizing in self-defense and resisting the LRA. Spikes in rebel violence were also seen in the aftermath of large counter-insurgency operations. Operation Iron Fist, carried out by the Ugandan government in 2002 with support from the United States and Sudan, was expected to cripple the LRA, but the result was devastating for civilians. Violence against non-combatants soared, and the LRA extended its reach in northern Uganda to unprecedented levels.⁵⁹

There was a set of practical motivations for violently targeting civilians as well. First, it prevented civilians from reporting LRA movements and other intelligence to the government. Second, by triggering mass displacements of communities, violence facilitated the looting of abandoned villages.⁶⁰ Third, the LRA’s extensive violence against civilians undermined Museveni’s regime and decreased northern support for the government by revealing the state’s failure to protect its people.⁶¹ Fourth, abduction of youth

satisfied a critical, logistical need: building an army of troops. In an environment with minimal voluntary enlistment in the army, forcibly recruiting soldiers among the youth population was necessary for the LRA's survival. Challenging the NRA with an army of child soldiers also created a problem for the government. During a confrontation, it was impossible to differentiate LRA rebels from children, and so the state was left in a no-win situation. Based on the same logic, civilians were also more reluctant to attack the LRA.⁶²

Persecuting the population with brutal forms of violence also benefited the LRA, because fear operates as a force multiplier.⁶³ The LRA created a climate of terror by committing conspicuous acts of violence, such as cutting off arms, legs, ears, and lips, promoting the image of an omnipotent, indestructible army, and maximizing the traditional guerilla tactics of surprise and unpredictability. Constructing an ethos of fear ultimately contributed to the LRA's success fending off the NRA in a fundamentally asymmetric war that pitted the fragile LRA against the stronger state apparatus.⁶⁴

Sexual Violence in the LRA: Patterns of Forced Marriage

The LRA's repertoire of sexual violence in northern Uganda was strikingly narrow; it solely comprised forced marriage. The LRA abducted boys to train them for combat, while girls were employed in numerous and complex roles, and were primarily put to work as cooks, porters, and wives.⁶⁵ Married girls were not only raped, but also subjected to forced labor and made to perpetrate violence. Data on patterns of LRA violence are not reliable, as they are based on small and biased samples. Nevertheless, approximately half of abducted females are estimated to have been the forced wives of LRA soldiers and commanders.⁶⁶

Many fail to distinguish the critical differences between forced marriage and sexual slavery, as both are non-consensual relationships.⁶⁷ Despite not being recognized by customary, Ugandan, or international law, these marriages were intended to be experientially akin to a formal marriage:

They have the traditional characteristics of shared domicile, bearing of children, domestic responsibilities, exclusivity and sex. The nature of the relationships forces women and girls to take on roles as sexual partners, mothers to the children born from these relationships, cooks, domestics, water collectors, porters, food producers, and gatherers. The relationships consist of a familial aspect where children are born and raised by abducted mothers and their captor husbands.⁶⁸

The crime of forced marriage thus comprises elements not captured by sexual enslavement, namely its conjugal and exclusive dimensions. For these reasons, Carlson and Mazurana argue forced marriage is both a sexual and non-sexual gender-based crime. This point is not meant to belittle the sexual violence that transpired within these marriages. Sexual activity between husband and wife was mandated by the LRA and monitored by commanders.⁶⁹ Women who refused sex were beaten. Men who refused were threatened by their commanders with punishment, and so few disobeyed. The purpose of intercourse was to reproduce, and half of the forced wives gave birth while in captivity.⁷⁰ Wives who failed to conceive were given “medical treatment,” though it is unclear what this entailed.⁷¹

FORCED MARRIAGE AS STRATEGY

The practice of forced marriages was a strategy designed and implemented by the LRA leadership; it was neither opportunistic behavior by individual soldiers, nor was it a widespread practice ignored by the commanders. The LRA leaders orchestrated every stage of the girls’ experience, including their abduction, distribution as wives, and reproductive activities.⁷²

When the LRA carried out its raids, it captured boys without method; the only characteristic considered was the boy’s age.⁷³ On the other hand, the leadership strictly controlled the abduction of girls according to numerous specifications. Commanders documented the numbers of girls who were captured, escaped, and died, and these records were relayed to the LRA’s second-in-command,

Vincent Otti.⁷⁴ He tracked how many new female abductees were needed to compensate for the losses and dictated the number of girls to be abducted. Following a raid, the field units communicated with their superiors via radio to inform them of the number of males and females abducted.⁷⁵ If the figures were adequate, the group returned to the LRA bases in Sudan.

Upon returning to the Sudanese bases, women and girls were isolated for a period prior to distribution as wives by the most senior LRA leaders.⁷⁶ This responsibility lay with Kony himself, Otti, and select top-ranked officials in the position known as "BM,"⁷⁷ who answered directly to Kony and Otti. Wives were allocated according to the men's status. Commanders and high-ranking fighters received five wives on average, while low-level fighters had one or two.⁷⁸ Kony himself is believed to have married more than forty abducted females. Although in some instances marriages were arranged through a lottery system, distribution occurred primarily on the basis of the leaders' placement. Commanders' preferences were taken into account, and they could describe the age and appearance they desired for their wives.⁷⁹ Intelligent, educated girls were especially coveted, because they could perform tasks for their husbands that involved writing or recording information. Once assigned to a man, girls were obligated to become his wife; refusal was punished by beating, rape, torture, or death.⁸⁰

Given that the LRA leadership coordinated and executed forced marriages, the question is then why they invested in this strategy. Several explanations have been proposed that are insufficient to explain the emergence of the institution of forced marriage, which I will now address in turn.

Theory One: Girls were needed to perform women's work and fill necessary combat and support roles. Girls undoubtedly fulfilled vital needs of the organization, and their value in this respect explains the LRA's abduction of females for indoctrination into their group. However, this theory does not account for the commanders' orders for women to marry and reproduce. One cannot simply ask why the presence of girls was valuable, but rather why the institution of forced marriage was worthwhile.

*Theory Two: Forced marriages were implemented in order to remove the desire to rape non-combatants (what Wood terms “the substitution argument”).*⁸¹ Given that the rape of non-combatants is absent from the LRA’s repertoire of violence, one might be tempted to accept the substitution argument as a valid explanation for forced marriage. However, armed groups in many other conflicts neither systematically rape civilians nor support forced marriages (e.g., Sri Lanka and Israel/Palestine).⁸² It is therefore possible to avoid rape without establishing an alternative outlet for sex through forced marriages. Why, then, would the LRA build such a complex institution for the purpose of avoiding rape? The substitution argument fails to sufficiently explain the policy of forced marriage.

*Theory Three: Joseph Kony was perpetuating a hedonistic lifestyle for himself in which he had authority, easy access to resources and the first choice of wives.*⁸³ As leader of a rebel group that terrorized northern Uganda, Kony certainly had a level of power and influence he would not otherwise possess. However, the personal benefits Kony derived from the organization, such as his accumulation of handpicked wives, cannot explain the implementation of forced marriage throughout his forces. There was a clear imbalance in the resources to which Kony had access; he married at least forty women, in contrast to the commanders’ five and the low-level fighters’ one or two wives. If Kony’s personal benefit was driving the practice of forced marriage, then why would he allocate any wives to other soldiers instead of appropriating all the girls for himself? If the motivation for the policy of forced marriage was maintaining the personal benefit Kony derived, then it would not have been worthwhile to institutionalize this program across the LRA.

Theory Four: Existing cultural norms that supported forced marriage were merely pushed into the context of conflict. One perspective claims that the LRA’s forced marriages evoke historical and cultural customs in northern Uganda in which “marriage by capture” was not uncommon.⁸⁴ “Girls are mostly taken to become ‘wives’ in much the same way as chiefs and war leaders in the past . . . In taking young women as ‘wives,’ the LRA has systematically manipulated and corrupted certain existing conventions and moral norms.”⁸⁵

However, the veracity of this claim is contested.⁸⁶ Acholi culture prized marriages arranged through periods of courtship and payment of a bride price.⁸⁷ Modernity has produced alternatives to traditional bride-wealth marriages, but these include Christian marriage, elopement, and single parenthood—not marriage by capture.⁸⁸

One can also discern plausible anecdotal evidence from external reactions to forced marriage from outside the LRA to counter the marriage-by-capture theory. Acholi and Langi society do not recognize LRA forced marriages as legitimate; consent from the bride, bridegroom, and both sets of parents are required in order for the marriage to satisfy customary law.⁸⁹ Some former LRA wives who reintegrate into their communities are shunned by their families or confronted with demands to abandon their children born in captivity. Many women are forced to participate in a cleansing ceremony to rid themselves of guilt and experiences of rape and forced impregnation.⁹⁰ These hostile reactions seem to challenge the notion that forced marriages were merely an extension of a culturally accepted practice.

Yet even if Allen and Schomerus' argument is true, questions about the LRA's systematic implementation of forced marriage still arise. Why did the LRA cultivate this cultural norm even while destroying others? The LRA desired to cleanse Acholi society of its impurities, such as witchcraft and Westernization, and to create a new order.⁹¹ It therefore seems more likely that the LRA would seek to disrupt existing social conventions. And they did. For instance, murders, mutilations, and disrespect for those killed would have been especially taboo among the Acholi. Ancestors are highly revered, and providing the dead with a proper burial was of the utmost importance—so much so that there are even burial rituals for the enemy.⁹² The LRA wholly disregarded such cultural norms. Clearly an explanation beyond culture and tradition is necessary to account for the LRA's promotion of forced marriage. An analogous phenomenon occurred through the LRA's manipulation of traditional Acholi spirituality:

Before the current conflict, these religious practices were already

playing important roles . . . The LRA is firmly embedded in these local belief systems, even though they have been reshaped into a new spiritual order. On the other hand, drawing on these real beliefs serves a strategic rationality.⁹³

Though historical antecedents and cultural reference points could have contributed to forced marriage's origins in the LRA, they alone cannot sufficiently explain its institutionalization. Like the LRA's system of spirituality, the practice of forced marriage must have offered the rebels an additional advantage that perpetuated its systematic implementation.

Explaining Forced Marriage in the LRA

This section lays out a theory explaining forced marriage in the LRA based on the assumption that it offered value to the organization. In short, the marriage of abducted girls to LRA soldiers and commanders strengthened the effectiveness of the rebel group. Carlson and Mazurana put forth this argument, but they capture only half of the story.⁹⁴ Forced marriage strengthened the LRA by two mechanisms: it acted as a compensation and reward system, and it created bonds among soldiers while fostering dependency on the LRA. Carlson and Mazurana discuss the former but neglect the latter. Forced marriage thus satisfied needs that emerged because of the environment in which the LRA operated—one lacking material wealth or popular support—and so the political and economic context of the war and the emergence of forced marriage cannot be disentangled.

To a large extent, women were allotted to males as a form of compensation and reward. As one of several tools of control, material rewards were promised to troops by LRA commanders upon military success.⁹⁵ However, the organization was impoverished, and money and the spoils of village raids were rarely dispensed.⁹⁶ The allocation of wives to male soldiers acted as a surrogate payment system in the absence of distributable material goods. Forced marriage functioned not only as a low-cost system of remuneration but also as a means of rewarding bravery and highlighting high sta-

tus.⁹⁷ Those with higher rank were honored in part by their right to multiple wives, all of whom they also had the privilege of hand-picking. Forced marriages thus incentivized bravery and loyalty and induced psychological benefits for the rebels by boosting their morale.⁹⁸

Although compensation is a critical feature of the purpose of forced marriage, it does not explain its presence entirely. During the war, for example, raiders stole 98 percent of the Acholi's cattle, along with large numbers of goats, sheep, and poultry.⁹⁹ The thieves were primarily from the Karamajong tribes and the UPDF; the LRA were involved in this crime to a much lesser extent.¹⁰⁰ It is curious that the LRA did not engage in more cattle raids as a means of compensating for their lack of significant resources. Perhaps the explanation lies in their mobile structure and the logistical challenges of moving between the Ugandan bush and LRA camps in Sudan. However, since the LRA was already confronted with these challenges when transporting abducted persons and plunder from abandoned villages, this defense is unconvincing.

The LRA's relative inattention to cattle raiding implies that the need for wealth, food and other resources was not the only motivation behind their repertoire of violence. If wives were distributed solely due to the absence of material goods, then it is peculiar that the rebels would bypass a lucrative opportunity like cattle raiding. This oddity highlights the fact that the LRA targeted girls for abduction and marriage for reasons beyond mere resource collection and distribution. The use of women as compensation is insufficient by itself to explain the presence of forced marriage; some dimension of their humanity added value to the LRA.

Indeed, women benefited the LRA because they created families. As a judgment from the Special Court for Sierra Leone highlighted, forced marriages are "intended to impose a forced conjugal association upon the victims rather than exercise an ownership interest."¹⁰¹ By creating families, the LRA forged bonds and fostered dependencies that helped keep together its force of abducted youth. Marriage increased the wives' reliance on their husbands through two pathways. First, women were treated differently according to

the rank of their husbands, and so some women may have relied on their spouses for protection.¹⁰² Second, the birth and care of children reinforced wives' dependence on their husbands for material support.¹⁰³ The behavior of widowed forced wives illustrates this dynamic. Though they were permitted to abstain from a second marriage, widows rarely refused another husband because they perceived marriage as the only way to care for their children.¹⁰⁴ Children in Acholi society are greatly valued, and "childlessness is one of the most serious misfortunes imaginable."¹⁰⁵ The LRA's order to reproduce capitalized on this cultural value.

Families were also created through the adoption of young female abductees. Pre-pubescent girls were not forcibly married initially, but were instead assigned to families, instructed to call the commander "father," and treated as domestic slaves.¹⁰⁶ Sex with these girls was prohibited, but once they reached puberty, they transitioned to the role of the commanders' wives.¹⁰⁷

Forced marriage and the creation of family units thus helped glue together an armed force composed of abducted youth who otherwise had no allegiances to the LRA. Building webs of interdependence was important for the LRA because it promoted loyalty to the group and minimized the likelihood of escape. Loyalty and unit cohesion was entirely constructed by the LRA, and forced marriage was a crucial tool to accomplish these ends. Other instruments employed by the LRA will be discussed in the next section.

The Curious Absence of Extra-Marital Rape

The LRA committed a litany of violent offenses. LRA soldiers abducted children and forced them into combat and marriage. Commanders both coerced male soldiers to rape their forcibly married wives and compelled women to give birth and raise children in captivity.¹⁰⁸ The rebels disfigured and mutilated civilians, murdered others, and pillaged abandoned villages.¹⁰⁹ Yet certain practices are noticeably absent from this repertoire of violence. LRA rebels did not rape civilians during village raids. Commanders did not indoctrinate newly abducted youth by pressuring them to gang

rape women and girls. And abducted girls were not raped outside of sanctioned forced marital relationships. 6.5 percent of never married abducted females and 1.7 percent of non-abducted females were raped,¹¹⁰ compared to 93.5 percent of forced wives.¹¹¹ These statistics, though imperfect estimates of the magnitude of violence, suggest that rape outside forced marriage may not have been altogether absent but remained relatively infrequent compared to the rape of forced wives.

Though disheartening to admit, one would expect horrifying acts of rape outside marriage to be included among the LRA's multitude of crimes. All of the aforementioned motivations for the LRA's violent targeting of civilians—purification of society, seeking vengeance, spreading fear, undermining the government, etc.—would also be achieved by raping non-combatants. Public gang rapes would have been particularly effective at accomplishing some of these goals. Indeed, the literature on sexual violence predicts the LRA would have raped more non-combatants and unmarried abducted girls than was observed. Scholars such as Dara Kay Cohen argue that gang rape is perpetrated in order to satisfy the internal socialization needs of an armed group. Cohen asserts that armed groups with low levels of internal cohesion use gang rape as a means of forging unity and compliance.¹¹² The quintessential group with little cohesion is one that forms its army through forced recruitment, using methods such as abduction. Gang rape is valuable to such groups, because it induces a sense of shared responsibility for the crime, establishes allegiances between soldiers, and makes it more difficult for abductees to abandon the army. Considering that the LRA was thoroughly reliant upon abduction for constructing its army, the LRA seems to exemplify the armed group that Cohen models.

Nevertheless, gang rape is not the only possible mechanism for achieving these ends, and the LRA obviated the need for gang rape by employing other socialization methods. Since these practices provided more benefits to the LRA and were less costly than rape, the leadership acted to curb rape by its forces. The result was a blanket prohibition on rape by the LRA and the overall absence

of gang rape from its repertoire of violence.

Substitutes for Gang Rape in Socializing Abducted Combatants

Although the LRA's repertoire of violence deviates from that predicted by Cohen, the organization was still vulnerable to the problems she identifies as facing groups with low internal cohesion. Nevertheless, gang rape is not the only means of socializing an army, and the LRA adopted other methods to meet its socialization needs. The primary tools the LRA utilized were material rewards (i.e., forced wives), political propaganda, spirituality, and brutal violence. Like gang rape, these four practices promoted cohesion within the units and loyalty to the LRA. Commanders employed them to indoctrinate newly acquired children into the army and control its rebel forces.

Forced wives: As previously described, the LRA forced abducted females to marry male soldiers and commanders in order to maintain an army of forced recruits. The LRA built loyalties within the group by creating families, which fostered inter-dependent relationships among the forces. The organization sought to reduce the likelihood that abductees would escape by compelling married couples to reproduce and raise children together. Having multiple wives also highlighted fighters' status and bravery, which boosted troop morale.

Political propaganda: Despite mainstream media accounts to the contrary, the LRA had a political agenda that precipitated its insurgency. Commanders frequently used political propaganda to motivate their abductees, and this tactic was found to have been relatively effective at inducing loyalty to the LRA.¹¹³ One former soldier said, "When I was just abducted I was optimistic that we would win this war because the commanders kept on telling us that we would overthrow the government soon."¹¹⁴ Though political messages were neither the LRA's primary nor most visible tool of control, surveys show that political propaganda was communicated to abductees at high levels on par with levels of spiritual rhetoric.¹¹⁵

Spirituality: The LRA's spiritual ideology was critical to its indoctrination of abductees and maintenance of control over its forces. Spiritual practices were "a clear attempt to create new social bonds and loyalty based on a shared cosmology (as well as fear). Kony created a cult of mystery and spiritual power which few abductees or civilians question even now."¹¹⁶ Most abductees participated in a spiritual initiation ceremony involving prayer rituals and anointment of local oil. There were numerous spiritual rules that restricted all facets of the soldiers' behavior, including washing, eating, prayer, and sex.

The rule forbidding sexual activity outside of forced marriages, for instance, reflected cultural norms against rape that were exploited for a strategic purpose. The effect of this prohibition on extramarital sex and other rules and rituals was to provide structure for newly acquired abductees.¹¹⁷ It gave them a sense of control during a period of uncertainty and thus proved a critical element in their transition into the LRA.

Kony was thought to possess considerable spiritual power, which greatly contributed to his effective control of his army. Moreover, the soldiers were persuaded that they were accountable to a higher power that could punish them in battle with death. Belief in a supernatural monitoring system with retributive capabilities was incredibly valuable to the LRA command hierarchy as it meant soldiers could be continuously observed by omniscient spirits.¹¹⁸ The LRA was thus structured to create powerful incentives for compliance.

Brutal violence: The LRA's socialization tactic most similar to gang rape was the beatings and killings that they forced abductees to execute. A former abductee recalled:

They say they are removing the civilian type of life from you; they want to change you into a military person. So instead of giving me a gun, I was given a lock wire. Then we got some six people and I was told to use the lock wire to beat these people. And I had to do it, because if you don't do it you are the next person.¹¹⁹

These forced attacks occurred soon after children were cap-

tured, and their function was manifold. They desensitized abductees to violence, broke down their resistance, and made it increasingly difficult for them to desert the LRA and return home, where the threat of punishment was palpable. A sizable minority of abductees was forced to kill or beat friends and family members.¹²⁰ Like gang rape, the collective commission of these crimes bred a sense of shared responsibility for the violent act. In this way, the forced perpetration of appalling acts of violence had a perceptible impact on the abductees' loyalties and commitment to the LRA.

CONTROLLING SEXUAL VIOLENCE: HOW THE LRA SUCCEEDED

Given that the LRA used methods other than gang rape to socialize its abducted combatants, it is necessary to turn to the question of how and why the LRA avoided this form of sexual violence. Like Cohen, Amelia Hoover Green interprets the presence and absence of sexual violence as the product of an armed group's socialization methods. She contends that discipline alone cannot restrain violence. Rather, sustained controlled violence occurs when soldiers are persuaded to value controlled violence through political programs institutionalized by their commanders.¹²¹ Hoover Green uses controlled violence to refer to "violence with a relatively narrow, consistent repertoire."¹²² In other words, violence is controlled in its form, and considering in so far the overall absence of rape outside forced marriage, the LRA's practices of sexual violence would appear to exemplify this concept.

Also in line with Hoover Green's predictions, sexual violence and gang rape were suppressed through the commanders' decisions and the institutions they created. As previously described, the LRA had a strong organizational structure and clear hierarchy of leadership that made it possible for them to enforce these norms. For instance, a rare story of soldiers violating the directives on sexual behavior tells of Kony demoting all the officers in the Sinia Brigade for having sex with women in a village.¹²³ However, the means by which the LRA commanders achieved this control over violence

differed from Hoover Green's predictions. The LRA's political education programs were weak in comparison to its disciplinary systems, which Hoover Green suggested would lead to a widening repertoire of violence. This prediction was not realized in the LRA.

The LRA's political propaganda provided a narrative for the war's purpose by rallying troops around the goal of overthrowing Museveni's government. However, this failed to justify the LRA's violence against civilians, which seems to be the area in which soldiers' mindsets most needed adjustment. Furthermore, many abductees' faith in the plausibility of this political outcome waned quickly. One former soldier said, "But after seeing what atrocities these rebels were doing, like killing many civilians, looting and continuous fighting without any success, I realized the rebels are wasting time and we'll not overthrow the government."¹²⁴ This statement and other similar comments cast doubt on the efficacy of the LRA's political propaganda to imbue the war with a sense of purpose and modify natural instincts regarding violence against civilians.

The institution through which the LRA most powerfully shaped its forces' behavior was its spiritual order. It established behavioral rules, valorized controlled violence, and framed the narrative of the conflict violence as a purification of society. In Hoover Green's language, the spiritual institutions were effective at changing soldiers' habits and standard operating procedures.¹²⁵ Yet it is not clear that this occurred by shaping soldiers' preferences to correspond with those of the commanders.

The LRA's spiritual order acted as not only an institution to induce preferential behavior changes but also the LRA's disciplinary system. The leadership was successful at controlling the army by instilling in its soldiers a fear of divine retribution for disobeying orders and established rules. It is conceivable that discipline was as effective, if not more so, as the spiritual institutions' narrative elements at changing behavioral norms. In addition to its extensive holy rules, key elements of the LRA's spirituality were Kony's perceived relationship with the spirits and the authority of supernatural powers. These elements of control had leverage over troops

because they bred a fear of punishment.

Hoover Green's theory—"discipline-only" armies will not be successful in the long-term—is not substantiated by the LRA. She argues that external disincentives are frequently unenforceable; however, her reasoning for that claim is not applicable to the LRA. First, the problem of information asymmetry is irrelevant in this case, because punishment ostensibly came from an omniscient spiritual power. Second, the army is composed of abducted children, and so there is no selection bias that could pre-dispose the army to violence. Third, the punishment for being fearful in battle or disobeying orders was almost always death, and statements from former soldiers reinforce the intuition that death is a sufficiently strong punishment to alter behavior. Considering the powerful effect of discipline on soldiers' behavior and the relative weakness of the LRA's political and spiritual framing of the war, it is possible that discipline played the dominant role in controlling the LRA's sexual violence.

Controlling Sexual Violence: Why

Given that the LRA embodies Hoover Green's notion of controlled violence, she would predict that its commanders regulated violence because they were incentivized to control their soldiers' behavior. Hoover Green holds that groups dependent on non-combatants for information are more likely to control violence. Yet the LRA did not depend on non-combatants for intelligence. On the contrary, they hoped to prevent civilians from becoming government informants. The LRA would have probably benefitted from permitting more indiscriminate violence than was observed. The mechanisms that Hoover Green predicts would incentivize army leaders to control violence are thus irrelevant to the LRA.

Likewise, several additional reasons for why commanders might control sexual violence do not hold for the LRA.¹²⁶ Although LRA rebels hoped to overthrow the government, their vicious acts of violence and desire for vengeance suggest they were not concerned about undermining public support for their future

rule. They were also untroubled by the need to create a comfortable environment to attract female recruits and undeterred by international law. A multitude of practical, normative and strategic reasons fail to explain the LRA's rationale for controlling sexual violence, which begs the question: what motivated the LRA to control violence?

The LRA leadership restricted sexual crimes because gang rape was not instrumental to the LRA's success. After being socialized, troops are more likely to perpetrate wide repertoires of violence, even when not directed to commit violence.¹²⁷ Leaders therefore must work to gain control over the violent groups they have created and prevent combatants from directing violence at their superiors. This universal problem for armed groups was compounded in the LRA by the practical challenge of garnering troop loyalty in a fragile army composed of involuntary soldiers and devoid of material resources. Accordingly, the necessity of and emphasis on control may have been magnified in the LRA. The leadership would have benefited from limiting violence to the extent possible without impinging on its political and military agenda. Hoover Green argues that sexual violence is the offense most likely to be "overproduced" in an armed group because it is one of the crimes most likely to occur for private, rather than strategic, purposes.¹²⁸ Hence, military commanders will aim to restrict those crimes. In other words, controlling the soldiers' sexual violence was a critical means of exerting control over a potentially tenuous army.

While cultural norms against rape were exploited for a strategic purpose, such conventions are not sufficient to explain the absence of this crime given that many other norms were not respected. Why did the LRA respect the social taboo of rape while breaking others? In the case of the LRA, there were additional strategic reasons to select sexual violence for such targeted constraints.

The mutilation of bodies was one social taboo repeatedly violated by the LRA, and bodily disfigurement was featured in the LRA's repertoire of violence and used to socialize new combatants. I described above how acts of beating and murder triggered the same mental processes as gang rape (e.g., fear of returning home, a

sense of collective responsibility for violence, and desensitization to violence), which allowed them to be substituted for rape as a method of indoctrination. Mutilations could produce the same impact. In addition, they have an incredibly powerful psychological pull that rape does not generate as forcefully. The violation of bodily integrity through gross disfigurement elicits the emotion of disgust. It is well established that disgust is a potent tool to incite people to vicious acts of violence in instances of mass murder, genocide, and ethnic cleansing.¹²⁹ By disfiguring civilians and making them appear “disgusting,” the LRA dehumanized Acholi and Langi society and stripped them of their moral value. Moral considerations and empathy therefore did not apply to them, and it would have been easier for soldiers to inflict incredible violence upon them. The power of disgust to facilitate the commission of violence was thus a powerful incentive for the LRA to order the disfigurement of civilians, as well as beatings and killings, which involved a similar mutilation of the body. Though rape undeniably involves the violation of the body and devaluation of the victim, it does not evoke the same intense feelings of revulsion as the aforementioned acts.

In summary, gang rape was not necessary for the LRA's repertoire of violence. Alternative socialization methods were just as effective at achieving the LRA's practical needs. Though it is debatable whether these other acts of violence, such as bodily mutilation, reaped additional benefits for the LRA that could not be gained through gang rape, it is fair to say that the LRA at a minimum did not lose anything by forbidding acts of rape. This is especially true considering that soldiers' sexual desires were ostensibly already satisfied through the mandated sexual activities of their forced marriages. Not only was gang rape unnecessary, but it may have also been counterproductive. A priority for the LRA was to control its troops, and a critical means of doing so was controlling their behavior, including their violence. Sexual violence was targeted for constraint in part because of cultural norms but also because rape is the crime most vulnerable to being perpetrated for private, rather than strategic reasons. Sexual activities within forced marriages were structured, controlled by commanders, and sanctioned

for strategic reasons that benefited the organization. On the other hand, uncontrolled sexual activities, whether that of consensual sex between soldiers or the rape of civilians, could have escalated and threatened organizational control. They were therefore prohibited.

Theory of Forced Marriage without Extra-Marital Rape

The LRA's repertoire of violence in northern Uganda presents an empirical puzzle: the rebels performed an array of brutal crimes against non-combatants, including systematically forcing abducted girls into marriage, but they committed no acts of rape beyond the non-consensual sex that occurred within these marriages. I described why this unexpected pattern of violence emerged, and now I offer a theoretical framework for this descriptive analysis. An armed group will arrange forced marriages but refrain from other acts of rape, especially gang rape, when the following three circumstances coincide.

The armed group faces a strong need to control its troops and create internal loyalties. Groups likely to encounter this challenge most acutely will be those that forcibly recruit their troops. When combined with the two conditions outlined below, this problem will not lead to increased gang rape as predicted. Rather, it will cause commanders to restrict sexual violence except in its most controlled forms, such as forced marriages. Sexual activities in forced marriages will be promoted for the purpose of reproduction as they can be monitored and enforced, and they effectively bind soldiers together through inter-dependent relationships.

Other elements in the armed group's repertoire of violence can substitute for or build upon the psychological mechanisms through which gang rape benefits the armed group. Gang rape is not the sole tool available to armed groups to socialize its forces. If the organization utilizes another act of violence that produces similar effects to gang rape, then this practice will not be needed and commanders can prohibit it without damaging their operation.

Cultural norms reject rape and support the importance of marriage and children. Cultural references are important for orient-

ing soldiers to new behavioral expectations. Though these values hold true in most societies, they differ in their relative importance. Armed groups in societies that strongly identify with this value set will be more likely to engage in forced marriage and reject rape if the two aforementioned conditions exist.

Although this theory needs to be evaluated in light of other conflicts, initial research suggests that the Cambodian genocide and the rebellion in Algeria may provide additional support. The Algerian rebel group Polisario recruits children from displaced persons camps, arranges forced marriages to compensate for the loss of its members, and bans the use of birth control in these relationships.¹³⁰ These practices of forced marriage echo those observed in the LRA. In addition, rape is otherwise absent from the organization's repertoire of violence, and women are imprisoned for unsanctioned sexual relations.

During the Cambodian genocide, the Khmer Rouge arranged forced marriages and severely punished those who had sexual activities outside of marriage. Forced marriage "was intended as a method of obtaining control over people's sexuality and ensuring that the reproductive function was managed by the state to produce more workers for the revolution. Sex and romance outside of marriage were forbidden, on pain of death."¹³¹ An important difference between this regime and the LRA is that the primary victims of forced marriage in Cambodia were the civilians in Khmer Rouge labor camps rather than combatants. However, the conflicts still offer a useful comparison, because the relationship between LRA commanders and their abducted troops has much in common with that of the Khmer Rouge and the civilians contained in camps and forced into labor. Further research is needed to assess whether these cases corroborate with the proposed theory.

CONCLUSIONS

The international response to the LRA-induced crisis has been generally lukewarm but punctuated by periods of interest in the past decade. Efforts to quell the violence against civilians and

defeat the rebels have tended to be unsuccessful and even outright counterproductive. Today the regional capacity and political will to fight the LRA is flagging, and so international support through the African Union, United Nations, and bilateral agreements is critical. The United States federal government's attention is currently on an upswing, which also triggers greater attention to the LRA among journalists, NGOs, human rights advocates, legal analysts, and the general public. This moment thus presents a critical opportunity to learn from the LRA's past and heed the policy implications to be gleaned from this analysis.

It is imperative to ask why the LRA's repertoire of violence developed in order to understand how this society—one that committed gross atrocities on a mass scale—came into being and how it operates. There has been much uncertainty and disagreement in the international community over how to characterize this enemy. Examining the causes of the LRA's violence offers valuable insights into the group's operations, the purpose of its violence, and its strategies for achieving its goals. The LRA patterns of forced marriage highlight the depth of the leadership's control and the extent to which a military hierarchy prevailed. Their repertoire of violence suggests survival was a chief concern, and inducing loyalty a principal means of sustaining the organization.

There is also an important need to disaggregate types of sexual violence. Sexual slavery, gang rape, forced marriage, and impregnation are different crimes, and distinguishing them has relevant human implications. Women subjected to gang rape or imprisoned for sex do not have the same psychological, financial, and legal needs following the war as former forced wives. Even as these wives attempt to reconnect with their communities, they may potentially have children or captor husbands who are seeking to continue the marriage.. Each crime necessitates different reintegration programs for abducted women. When non-governmental organizations (NGOs), governments, and the United Nations refer to LRA crimes as "sexual slavery" with no more detail into the subtleties of the offense, they lose important information about the victims' experiences.¹³² Conflating these crimes and ignoring experiential

differences between sexual enslavement and forced marriage devalues the complexity of the victims' traumas and renders forced wives invisible in international law.

Attaining this level of linguistic precision is unlikely in advocacy circles, however, as it is not conducive to the NGO community's agenda. The term "sexual slavery" is frequently used instead of "forced marriage" as if they were interchangeable, in part because of the stronger emotional response the former term triggers. The concept of slavery demands action; it evokes images of the most inhumane, immoral treatment, which is magnified by the sexual element of the enslavement. Forced marriage, on the other hand, might be interpreted as a form of arranged marriage to a generally apathetic international audience. Sensationalizing the crime is a tool—a powerful and arguably necessary one—for motivating action to stop it.

The need for faithful representations of LRA sexual violence is not an obsolete, academic problem; rather it continues to manifest in current portrayals of LRA violence in South Sudan, the DRC, and Central African Republic. Patterns of LRA sexual violence appear to have shifted since the war was exported from Uganda, but it is unclear how drastic this change was, as reports on recent LRA practices are inconsistent. Allen and his colleagues refer to "reports of systematic rape" and write, "Whereas in northern Uganda there were tight restrictions on LRA combatants' access to women for sexual purposes, these appear to have been largely set aside."¹³³ Elements of both continuity and divergence appear in NGO reports. Human Rights Watch suggests that abducted girls continue to be assigned to soldiers and commanders; but at the same time, the organization does not describe a marital component to these relationships, and it says girls were publicly raped after being distributed to commanders.¹³⁴ Another Human Rights Watch report asserts that women and girls were raped by the LRA in most attacks during the Christmas massacres in Congo.¹³⁵ The organization's anecdotal evidence does not imply that rape of non-abducted civilians is remarkably pervasive, but it suggests it occurs significantly more frequently than it had in Uganda. The U.S. De-

partment of State Human Rights reports do not help to clarify this matter, as they refer only broadly to the LRA's perpetration of rape and sexual violence and their abduction of children for use as sex slaves, without specifying whether abducted women and girls were forced to marry and raise children with LRA soldiers.¹³⁶

Understanding the LRA's repertoire of sexual violence in the years since it has left Uganda and how the rebels have responded to their rising vulnerability could help elucidate unanswered questions in this paper. If gang rapes are now committed during village raids or abducted women are publicly raped by LRA commanders, this will have important implications for how we conceive of the causes and purpose of the LRA's violence. However, given the current dearth of information, it is premature to make such conclusions. Further research on the LRA's most recent patterns of sexual violence is thus needed.

The above analysis of the LRA's behaviors could also help inform the goals and strategies of operations to defeat the organization. Recognizing the complex, strategic causes of sexual violence in the LRA is a reminder that its practices of violence exist for reasons beyond the personal desires of a single man. Joseph Kony's vindictive mentality, political ambitions, and sexual fantasies do not drive this repertoire of sexual violence. Removing Kony from the organization might not end the institutions of violence he has created, just as it may not destroy the LRA itself, nor would it end the Great Lakes' conflicts. In fact, experience has shown that military interventions have often sparked increased LRA violence toward civilians, and so renewed counter-insurgency efforts should bear this fact in mind and prioritize the protection of civilians.

Another area that warrants further research is the behaviors of individual soldiers who either committed or refrained from sexual violence. This paper has focused its analysis at the level of the armed group and examined decisions of the LRA leadership. However, my intention was not to deny agency to the lower-ranking combatants and suggest they had no control over whether to engage in or abstain from such offenses. The role of the low-level, individual fighter in perpetrating acts of sexual violence is especial-

ly interesting given that many of the captor husbands were themselves forcibly recruited into the LRA. This dynamic is one that could be the subject of additional investigation.

Finally, further research should be directed at confirming whether other cases, such as the Cambodian genocide and Algerian rebellion, support the theory outlined in this paper. A comparative empirical evaluation of this proposal would elucidate whether the LRA's repertoire of sexual violence is in fact an anomaly or reflects the need for a more flexible theory of armed group socialization practices that carefully distinguishes between forms of sexual violence.

Notes

- 1 International Criminal Court, Elements for Crimes, Article 8(2)(e)(vi)-6.
- 2 The Prosecutor v. Jean-Paul Akayesu, para. 688.
- 3 Khristopher Carlson and Dyan Mazurana, "Forced Marriage within the Lord's Resistance Army, Uganda," 7, 14-15.
- 4 Elisabeth Wood, "Variation in Sexual Violence during War," 308.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Wood, "Sexual Violence During War," 315.
- 8 Amelia Hoover Green, "Repertoires of Violence Against Noncombatants: The Role of Armed Group Institutions and Ideologies," 24.
- 9 Hoover Green, "Repertoires of Violence," 24.
- 10 Dara Kay Cohen, "Female Combatants and the Perpetration of Violence: The Case of Wartime Rape in the Sierra Leone Civil War," 6, 12-15.
- 11 Dara Kay Cohen, "Explaining Sexual Violence During Civil War."
- 12 Peace Research Institute, Oslo, "Notes on LRA: Sexual Violence in African Conflicts Database."
- 13 Carlson and Mazurana, "Forced Marriage," 7, 14-15, 40-41.
- 14 The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, "Letter from the President to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President Pro Tempore of the Senate Regarding the Lord's Resistance Army."
- 15 Adam Branch, "The roots of LRA violence," 27.
- 16 Tim Allen and Koen Vlassenroot, "Introduction," 6.
- 17 Ibid., 6-7.
- 18 Sverker Finnström, "An African hell of colonial imagination? The Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda, another story," 78. See also Refugee Law Project, "Behind the violence: Causes, Consequences and the Search for Solutions to the War in Northern Uganda," 8.
- 19 Allen and Vlassenroot, "Introduction," 7-8.
- 20 Branch, "The roots of LRA violence," 36.
- 21 Ibid., 9.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Ibid.

- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Finnström, "An African hell," 77.
- 26 Branch, "The roots of LRA violence," 41; Matthew Green, *The Wizard of the Nile: The Hunt for Africa's Most Wanted*, 56.
- 27 Finnström, "An African hell," 85-86.
- 28 Jeannie Annan, Christopher Blattman, Dyan Mazurana, & Khristopher Carlson, "Civil War, Reintegration, and Gender in northern Uganda," 9.
- 29 Annan, Blattman, Mazurana, & Carlson, "Civil War," 9; Christopher Blattman and Jeannie Annan, "On the nature and causes of LRA abduction: what the abductees say," 141.
- 30 Kristof Titeca, "The spiritual order of the LRA," 62.
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 Mareike Schomerus, "Chasing the Kony story," 94.
- 33 Blattman and Annan, "On the nature and causes"; Branch, "The roots of LRA violence"; Finnström, "An African hell"; Titeca, "The spiritual order."
- 34 Branch, "The roots of LRA violence," 25.
- 35 International Criminal Court, Warrant of Arrest for Joseph Kony Issued on 8 July 2005 as Amended on 27 September 2005, 5.
- 36 Ibid., 4.
- 37 International Criminal Court, Warrant of Arrest for Joseph Kony, 4; Vinci, "The Strategic Use of Fear," 368.
- 38 Anthony Vinci, "The Strategic Use of Fear by the Lord's Resistance Army," 368.
- 39 Ibid., 367.
- 40 Ibid., 368.
- 41 Bernd Beber and Christopher Blattman, "The Logic of Child Soldiering and Coercion," 15; Branch, "The roots of LRA violence," 34-35, 37-38; Finnström, "An African hell," 78-79.
- 42 Finnström, "An African hell," 82.
- 43 Branch, "The roots of LRA violence," 38.
- 44 Andrew Mwenda, "Uganda's politics of foreign aid and violent conflict: the political uses of the LRA rebellion," 49.
- 45 Allen and Vlassenroot, "Introduction," 1-3, 18-21.
- 46 International Criminal Court, Warrant of Arrest for Joseph Kony, 3.
- 47 Elisabeth Wood, "Sexual Violence During War: Variation and Accountability," 300.
- 48 Jeannie Annan, Christopher Blattman, Khristopher Carlson, and Dyan Mazurana, "The State of Female Youth in Northern Uganda: Findings from the Survey of War-Affected Youth (SWAY)," 1.
- 49 Carlson and Mazurana, "Forced Marriage," 4.
- 50 Wood, "Sexual Violence During War," 300.
- 51 Ibid.
- 52 Titeca, "The spiritual order," 69.
- 53 Branch, "The roots of LRA violence," 40.
- 54 Ibid.
- 55 Ibid.
- 56 Ibid., 41.
- 57 Vinci, "The Strategic Use of Fear," 366.
- 58 Refugee Law Project, "Behind the violence," 32.
- 59 Ron Atkinson, "The realists in Juba? An analysis of the Juba peace talks," 207.
- 60 Refugee Law Project, "Behind the violence," 21.
- 61 Finnström, "An African hell," 88.

- 62 Refugee Law Project, "Behind the violence," 31-33.
- 63 Vinci, "The Strategic Use of Fear," 361, 374.
- 64 Ibid.
- 65 Annan, Blattman, Carlson, and Mazurana, "The State of Female Youth," 34 & 40; Annan, Blattman, Mazurana, & Carlson, "Civil War," 9-10.
- 66 Annan, Blattman, Carlson, and Mazurana, "The State of Female Youth," 40 states that 42% of females abducted and held captive for more than two weeks were forcibly married. See also Annan, Blattman, Carlson, and Mazurana, "The State of Female Youth," 4 for more information on the study population and explanation of the sample biases.
- 67 Carlson and Mazurana, "Forced Marriage," 7, 14-15.
- 68 Ibid., 14.
- 69 Ibid., 23-24.
- 70 Ibid.; Annan, Blattman, Carlson, and Mazurana, "The State of Female Youth," 40.
- 71 Carlson and Mazurana, "Forced Marriage," 23.
- 72 Ibid., 18-21.
- 73 Blattman and Annan, "On the nature and causes," 138.
- 74 Carlson and Mazurana, "Forced Marriage," 18.
- 75 Ibid.
- 76 Ibid.
- 77 Ibid., 19.
- 78 Ibid., 4.
- 79 Ibid., 19.
- 80 Ibid.
- 81 Wood, "Sexual Violence During War," 306.
- 82 Wood, "Variation in Sexual Violence," 307, 313-314.
- 83 Refugee Law Project, "Behind the violence," 18.
- 84 Tim Allen and Mareike Schomerus, "A Hard Homecoming: Lessons Learned from the Reception Center Process in Northern Uganda," 24.
- 85 Ibid.
- 86 Christopher Blattman, conversation with author, October 4, 2011.
- 87 The Justice and Reconciliation Project, "Young Mothers, Marriage, and Reintegration in Northern Uganda: Considerations for the Juba Peace Talks," 3.
- 88 Ron Atkinson, "Acholi."
- 89 Carlson and Mazurana, "Forced Marriage," 51.
- 90 Ibid., 61.
- 91 Titeca, "The spiritual order," 92.
- 92 Thomas Harlacher, "Traditional ways of coping with consequences of traumatic stress in Acholiland: Northern Ugandan ethnography from a Western psychological perspective," 171, 182.
- 93 Titeca, "The spiritual order," 61.
- 94 Carlson and Mazurana, "Forced Marriage," 4.
- 95 Blattman and Annan, "On the nature and causes," 140.
- 96 Beber and Blattman, "The Logic of Child Soldiering," 18.
- 97 Annan, Blattman, Mazurana, & Carlson, "Civil War," 9.
- 98 Carlson and Mazurana, "Forced Marriage," 15.
- 99 Ibid., 13.
- 100 Ibid.
- 101 The Prosecutor v. Brima et. al., para. 190.
- 102 Carlson and Mazurana, "Forced Marriage," 23.
- 103 Ibid.
- 104 Ibid., 22.

- 105 Atkinson, "Acholi."
- 106 Green, *The Wizard of the Nile*, 136.
- 107 Carlson and Mazurana, "Forced Marriage," 21.
- 108 Annan, Blattman, Carlson, and Mazurana, "The State of Female Youth," 29, 40; Carlson and Mazurana, "Forced Marriage," 14, 24; International Criminal Court, Warrant of Arrest for Joseph Kony, 3, 12-13.
- 109 Annan, Blattman, Mazurana, & Carlson, "Civil War," 8; International Criminal Court, Warrant of Arrest for Joseph Kony, 3, 13-19; Vinci, "The Strategic Use of Fear," 360, 366.
- 110 Annan, Blattman, Mazurana, & Carlson, "Civil War," 10.
- 111 Ibid.
- 112 Cohen, "Female Combatants," 12-15.
- 113 Blattman and Annan, "On the nature and causes," 142.
- 114 Ibid., 143.
- 115 Ibid.
- 116 Ibid., 141.
- 117 Titeca, "The spiritual order," 63.
- 118 Ara Norenzayan and Azim Shariff, "The Origin and Evolution of Religious Prosociality," 58.
- 119 Ben Mergelsberg, "Between two worlds: former LRA soldiers in northern Uganda," 159.
- 120 Blattman and Annan, "On the nature and causes," 140-141.
- 121 Hoover Green, "Repertoires of Violence," 34.
- 122 Ibid., 24.
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- 125 Hoover Green, "Repertoires of Violence," ch 6.
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